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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that an English teacher needs to be a scholar, this paper outlines the benefits of rhetorical theory for the teacher, and suggests an approach for teaching theory to part- and full-time composition faculty. The major benefits, for the teacher, of learning rhetorical theory include: (1) becoming more professional; (2) improving classroom instruction; and (3) aiding the students. The paper also describes a rhetorical theory workshop at Ricks College designed to help meet the needs of the faculty. (Reading lists for workshops on 11 different topics are attached.) (RS)

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Continued Professional Development:

Teacher Training/Retraining Workshop

Rodney D. Keller

I need to preface my remarks by explaining the circumstances leading to the development of this paper. My institution, Ricks College located in Rexburg, Idaho, is the largest privately owned junior college in the nation. In the early 80s, our enrollment began to level off. Our Board of Trustees daringly decided to encourage more enrollment by decreasing the tuition 20%. The decrease went into effect in the fall of 1985. The Board's plan worked. In just four years, Ricks College enrollment has increased by nearly 1400 students (from 6300 to 7700). In fact this last fall semester (1988), the enrollment exceeded the unofficial ceiling of 7500, but because we have an open-door policy, no one has decided how to turn students away. Added to the increase of students is a ceiling of new full-time faculty hires. The faculty is not growing in proportion to the student population. To accomodate the need for teachers, the English department has had to rely significantly on part-time faculty. In fall 1984, the year before the decrease, the English department used only two part-time teachers to teach a total of three sections. Last semester, our department hired 18 part-time teachers to teach a total of 38 sections. (To add to the problem, the administration has recently approved to decrease the size of composition classes from 30 to 25 students. To accomodate this shift in class size, the department has had to create 19 more

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sections, 19 sections without teachers.) Rexburg is a rural farming community of 12,000 in southeastern Idaho with a limited pool of teachers to choose from. We currently have part-time facutly commuting more than 80 icy, winter miles one way. Since we do not have the pool we'd like to choose from, we, unfortunately, have had to hire some part-time teachers not as qualified as we would like. Therefore, we as a department have had to concentrate significantly on training and retraining both full-time and part-time faculty.

The department chair and the director of composition have conscientiously worked with principally the part-time faculty to prepare them for their classes. They meet almost weekly giving seminars on various aspects of the composing process and suggestions for implementation and evaluation. These seminars are justifiably basic method courses concentrating on the day by day survival in the class. However, the part-time teachers receive no rhetorical theory. The purpose of this paper, then, is to establish a need for studying rhetorical theory in addition to learning teaching methods and to outline the benefits of rhetorical theory for the teacher. I will also suggest an approach for teaching theory as well as offer a sample syllabus and bibliography.

Generally, most practicing teachers are reluctant to discuss "theory," much less rhetorical theory. Paul Ranieri claims that teachers have a tendency to "reflect [a]

negative attitude toward anything 'theoretical.' For too many teachers, theory is associated with irrelevance, boredom, impracticality, and academics" (18). The first step in training/retraining composition teachers is to give sufficient, practical reasons for rhetorical theory.

Francis Christensen's essay "Between Two Worlds" addresses which is more important for an English teacher: to be a teacher or to be a scholar. Christensen remembers teaching for the first time without the proper background. He relates, "I was a professor--professing to know, professing to teach, professing to teach others to teach--and I simply did not know my subject" (5). Christensen then emphatically declares, "The teacher of English must be a scholar" (2).

More recently, Ann E. Berthoff offers similar advice for teachers to become scholars. She claims that today's pedagogy concentrates on "exhortation," a type of babying writers along, making them feel more comfortable with writing. She explains this "exhortation" by stating:

> What we have these days is properly described, I think, as a pedagogy of exhortation: 'Feel comfortable. . . . Wake up! . . . Find something you're interested in. . . Get your thesis statement. . . . Say what you really think. . . Go over your paper and take out all unnecessary words.' But exhortation [Berthoff concludes] . . . is not instructive (743-744).

Berthoff insists that "what must supplant the pedagogy of exhortation is a 'pedagogy of knowing.' . . . Unless and until the mind of the learner is engaged, no meaning will be made, no knowledge can be won" (744). The teacher, to promote this "pedagogy of knowledge," must have already gained that "knowledge," not only through practice but also through rhetorical theory.

Paul Ranieri illustrates the English teacher's need for scholarship by using an engineer as an extended example. He writes:

> In 1958, Jack St. Clair Kilby drew the design for the first integrated circuit. That design would lead to the silicon chip, the semiconductor that gave birth to the multi-billion dollar microcircuitry industry. . . . Yet Jack Kilby is firm in denying that he is a <u>scientist</u>. He'd rather be called an <u>engineer</u>. While a scientist is motivated by knowledge, by a desire to "explain something," an engineer, says Kilby, wants to "solve problems, to make something work." For Kilby, engineering is a creative process. But then so is teaching.
>
> Teachers can learn from Kilby's method of attacking a problem. First even though only one piece in a million will be useful, Kilby amasses information in any area that could possibly relate to the problem. Then his thinking turns narrow, tuning out all of the obvious solutions from the start because they probably

have already been tried. Any solution then rests on his wide preparation, careful definition of the problem, selected focus on the key question, and on a dash of creativity and a little luck. . . .

[Ranieri continues:] All of us share Kilby's desire "to make something work." Yet we rarely acknowledge the prerequisites, the necessary elements, the iceberg below the surface, which are crucial to actual success in the classroom. Like students in the back of the lecture hall, we often are willing to be lectured, questioned, and evaluated without insisting on our rightful place in the educational process. Ironically though, that position, that place of professional respect, can be revived by a willingness to return again and again to the front of the hall, to the role of the student who not only asks the questions, but who also independently searches for the answers, wherever they may be.

[He concludes:] I've always been alternately enraged and challenged by the adage, "Those who can, do; those who cannot, teach." If education's prime goal is to teach students to become independent lifetime learners, then we as teachers should at least exemplify this standard in our own lives. We should be able to point to this ideal and say that we not only lead students to a love of learning, but that we also exemplify and practice that ideal ourselves. If not,

> our "profession" really deserves the abuse it so often receives (21-22).

Teachers, therefore, need to be scholars. But what are the practical, immediate benefits of being an English composition scholar, of learning rhetorical theory? Three major benefits of learning rhetorical theory include becoming more professional, improving classroom instruction, and aiding the students.

Often teachers of composition (and many times their students) fail to see themselves as professionals. Lawrence Stenhouse in "The Teacher as Researcher" explains the change that happens in a teacher's life while researching (and I also suggest learning rhetorical theory to become a composition teacher/scholar). He claims that through research a teacher becomes an "extended professional" who "1) is committed to study his or her own teaching, 2) has the skills to do so, and 3) is concerned to question and test theory in practice:" (144). Tori Haring-Smith in "The Importance of Theory in the Training of Teaching Assistants" notes:

> An exposure to theory may also help alleviate one of the biggest problems in composition teaching: burnout. While a knowledge of theory won't reduce the paper load, teachers who view their writing classes as presenting a series of sophisticated problems to be solved will see teaching as a more varied challenge than that posed by the correction of thirty themes a

week. Working from a theoretical framework, teachers can engage in effective self-reflection and self-evaluation; without that framework, self-examination may lead only to despair" (35).

Not only does rhetorical theory help teachers become more "professional," it helps improve classroom instruction. Haring-Smith claims that the major classroom benefit is coherence in instruction. She explains that "teachers of composition need theory for the reason that we all need theory--to give our activity coherence. In composition courses, we need a meaningful framework within which we can place individual exercises or readings--a framework that helps us and our students make sense of it all and links what we do on Tuesday with what we do on Thursday" (35). Additionally Marian M. Mohr confirms that the teachers she observed in a year long project who stayed intellectually alive through research

1. changed the way they planned lessons to respond to what they learned about students
2. [they] switched from evaluating to documenting what happened so that even irritating behavior became interesting
3. [they] learned to tolerate "messiness" in their thinking as they gradually discovered their ideas through research and writing [and]
4. [they] stopped teaching and started helping students learn (13-15).

Perhaps the most significant reason for learning rhetorical theory is aiding the students. Haring-Smith emphasizes how learning and applying rhetorical theory can accomplish this. She states:

> [Teachers] need to be familiar with various theories of composition so that they can understand what their students are doing. Looked at as a series of unrelated acts, our students' behavior can seem erratic and inexplicable. But to teach students, as Mina Shaughnessy pointed out so well, we must understand their logic, their theory of composing, and then compare it to our own. If we can eliminate students' basic misconceptions about composing, then we should be able to refine their composing habits. Once teachers are familiar with different theories of the teaching of writing, they can offer students truly different approaches to their writing problems--not just superficially different activities (35).

Now that I have presented the need for the English teacher to be a scholar as well as proposed some practical benefits for the scholarship, I plan to suggest an approach for teaching rhetorical theory to part-time faculty. That becomes difficult. If this rhetorical theory workshop were a graduate course, organizing and presenting the information would work well as a general classroom activity where the workshop director would function as the professor assigning readings, leading discussions, providing additional

resources, directing writing activities, and evaluating the participants' performances. But with part-time faculty, the workshop director becomes aware that there are no grades involved, that the fellow teachers are often floundering with teaching responsiblities and other obligations, and that the information needs to be accessible, immediate, and practical. In that respect, the over-worked and over-stressed faculty member is like the student who wants to be spoon-fed only the "important" information that will be on the exam.

To help meet the needs of the faculty (to be practical and pertinent), the rhetorical theory workshop should reflect the composition course outline and the outline of the teaching methods workshops. It is difficult juggling all three. To aid in this juggling and to alleviate some pressure of the teaching methods workshop, the Ricks College English Department has reached some conclusions. First, with the large number of part-time faculty, it is difficult for the department chair and the director of composition to be solely responsible for training and supervising. Therefore, they have solicited help from the full-time faculty. Each part-time faculty member is paired with a veteran full-time faculty member. The veteran's role is not as supervisor but as an experience resource. Since all full-time faculty are required to teach three composition sections a semester, the faculty is immediately invovled in all the day to day aspects of teaching composition. The

veterans provide informal, practical teaching methods. The veterans and part-time teachers also visit and observe each others' classes. This team approach significantly complements and relieves pressure from the methods workshops.

Another conclusion reached by the department has been to standardize texts used by the part-time faculty (full-time faculty have individual choice). The standardized texts provide more coherence in the workshop presentations. The text selections are based principally on the apparatus and guides available to help teachers teach and to help with the training and theory workshops. We have adopted the Sommers/McQuade Student Writers at Work and in the Company of Other Writers (St. Martin's/Bedford) and Lunsford/Connors The St. Martin's Handbook. With The St. Martin's Handbook adoption, teachers may request the The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing (Connors/Glenn) as well as the Annotated Instructor's Edition for the handbook. These two teaching aids complement both theory and pedagogy. Connors, Lunsford, and Glenn simply and practically illustrate the use of rhetorical theory in the every day composition classroom. For example, in The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing, Connors and Glenn have selected major rhetorical theorists and have presented methods for implementing their approaches in the classroom. And in the Annotated Instructor's Edition of The St. Martin's Handbook, Connors and Lunsford provide background information,

suggested readings, teaching practice suggestions, writing suggestions, writers on writing, and other valuable information for most writing principles plus introductory rhetorical theory essays. These two texts organize the rheotrical theory workshops.

I have provided a draft of the syllabus we plan to implement for the rhetorical theory workshop using these two aids as our principal texts. Following each assignment from the St. Martin's works is a suggested bibliography. The workshop director will lead the discussion based on the required reading from the principal texts. The participants will come to the workshop prepared with a brief written summary of one suggested rhetorical theory reading to be shared with the group. This approach relieves the director of some responsiblity for the workshop and has the participants become more responsible not only for the workshop but for their own professional development through rhetorical theory.

This rhetorical theory/methods workshop will begin in the fall. We try to anticipate and solve potential problems, but others will evolve as the workshop evolves. We don't know what will happen, but we do know two things. First, we're getting started. And more importantly, we know teachers who seriously learn, research, and write with their students in mind significantly influence those students' lives. Students and teachers will see the importance of being intellectually active and will be

convinced of the necessity and inseparablity of thinking and writing in both academic and daily life.

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Workshop 1
Teaching Composition: An Overview

Read: **Guide to Teaching Writing**,* chapters 1-2 ("Preparing for the First Class" and "The First Few Days of Classes"); **Annotated Instructor's Edition**,* pp. I8-I16 (Lunsford and Glenn "Rhetorical Theory and the Teaching of Writing").

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Workshop 2
Designing Syllabi and Assignments

Read: **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, pp. I30-I34 ("Sample Syllabi").

Donovan, Timothy R. "Seeing Students as Writers." The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook. Eds. Gary Tate and Edward P.J. Corbett. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. 220-223.

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Schwegler, Robert A. and Linda K. Shamoon. "The Aims and Process of the Research Paper." College English 44.8 (December 1982): 817-824.

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Workshop 3
Teaching the Writing Process

Read: **Guide to Teaching Writing**, chapter 3 ("Everyday Activities"; **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, chapter 1 ("Understanding the Writing Process") and pp. I17-I21 (Ede and Lunsford "Let Them Write--Together").

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Workshop 4
Teaching Pre-Writing, Thesis, Stance

Read: **Guide to Teaching Writing**, chapter 5 ("Teaching Invention"); **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, chapter 2 ("Planning and Drafting").

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Workshop 5
Teaching Organization and Paragraphing

Read: **Guide to Teaching Writing**, chapter 6 ("Teaching Arrangement) and chapter 8, pp. 199-219 ("Teaching the Paragraph"; **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, chapter 5 ("Constructing Paragraphs").

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Workshop 6
Teaching Revision

Read: **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, chapter 3 ("Revising and Editing").

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Corder, Jim W. "What I Learned at School." The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook. Eds. Gary Tate and Edward P.J. Corbett. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. 163-169.

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Workshop 7
Evaluating Writing

Read: **Guide to Teaching Writing**, chapter 4 ("Responding to and Evaluating Student Essays"); **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, pp. I22-I25 (Lape and Glenn "Responding to Student Writing").

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Workshop 8
Teaching Argumentation and Logic

Read: **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, chapter 4 ("Understanding and Using Argument").

Booth, Wayne C. "Boring From Within: The Art of the Freshman Essay." The Norton Reader. Eds. Arthur M. Eastman and others. 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988. 332-343.

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Read: **Guide to Teaching Writing**, chapter 8, pp. 179-199 ("Teaching the Sentence").

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Lindemann, Erika. "Teaching about Sentences." A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. 131-140.

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Tibbetts, A. M. "Teaching the Readable Sentence." Working Papers: A Teacher's Observations on Composition. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1982. 3-28.

Weathers, Winston. "Teaching Style: A Possible Anatomy." The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook. Eds. Gary Tate and Edward P.J. Corbett. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. 325-332.

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Workshop 10
Teaching Style: Diction and Coherence

Read: **Guide to Teaching Writing**, chapter 7 ("Teaching Style"); **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, Part IV ("Sentences: Making Stylistic Choices").

Brostoff, Anita. "Coherence: 'Next to' Is Not 'Connected to.'" CCC 32.3 (October 1981): 278-294.

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Workshop 11
Teaching Grammar

Read: **Annotated Instructor's Edition**, Parts II and III ("Sentences: Making Grammatical Choices" and "Sentences: Making Conventional Choices").

Christensen, Francis and Bonnijean Christensen. "Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Modifiers Again." Notes Toward a New Rhetoric. 2nd ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1978. 117-132.

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Tibbetts, A. M. "Nobody Are Perfect: On Shaping a Course in Grammar." Working Papers: A Teacher's Observations on Composition. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1982. 29-54.